

THE RITUAL OBLIGATIONS AND DONOR ROLES OF MONKS IN THE PĀLI VINAYA

More than once recently it has again been suggested that Buddhist monks had little or no role in life-cycle ceremonies in early India.¹ I do not know on what these suggestions are based, but it does not seem that it could be the Pāli texts. In fact, Buddhist *Vinaya* texts in Pāli, Sanskrit, and what G. Roth calls “Prākṛit-cum-Sanskrit” seem to suggest quite otherwise. They seem to suggest and assume that monks regularly had a role in such ceremonies and that their ritual presence and performance at such ceremonies was of some importance. Most passages, indeed, employ a language which suggests “obligation” (*karaṇīya*). The same texts suggest and assume that Buddhist monks were active donors to their own monastic community.

Ironically, the one “life-cycle” ceremony in which a significant place for monks has been explicitly conceded — the funeral — is also the one which is not explicitly included in the list of such moments that occurs in the passage of the Pāli *Vinaya* which seems most concerned with such things. But though the funeral is not there explicitly mentioned, the text may allude at least to death rituals as Edgerton

¹ H. Bechert & R. Gombrich, eds., *The World of Buddhism: Buddhist Monks and Nuns in Society and Culture*, (London: 1984), p. 14; R. Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism. A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*, (London: 1988), p. 124. That these sorts of remarks represent the received wisdom probably does not require documentation. Similar — if not stronger — suggestions have also been frequently made in regard even to monks’ participation in more specifically “Buddhist” ritual and cult practice, but see now G. Schopen, “Monks and the Relic Cult in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*: An Old Misunderstanding in Regard to Monastic Buddhism”, in *From Benares to Beijing: Essays on Buddhism and Chinese Religion in Honor of Jan Yün-hua*, eds. G. Schopen & K. Shinohara, (Oakville: 1991), pp. 187–201.

sometime ago seemed to surmise: it speaks of “illness” (*gilāna*), and the illness in question seems to be — to judge by context — terminal.¹

The passage in the Pāli *Vinaya* occurs in the *Vassupanāyika-khandhaka*, the section dealing with the “beginning of the rains.” In the Pali Text Society edition, the only one available to me, this passage is rather badly chopped up in an apparent attempt — on whose part I do not know, whether editor or scribe — to abbreviate repetitions. It deals in general with the occasions or situations in regard to which a monk can legitimately break the rain-retreat during which he was otherwise strictly forbidden to travel. One of these reasons — but only one — has been widely cited: a monk may be away for up to seven days if he goes to learn from a lay-brother (*upāsaka*) a “recognized *sūtra*” (*abhiññātāṃ ... suttantāṃ*) which would otherwise be in danger of being lost. There are, however, a number of other equally legitimate reasons.²

The enumeration of these reasons begins — in I. B. Horner’s translation — as follows:

This is a case, monks, where a dwelling-place for an Order comes to have been built by a layfollower (*idha pana bhikkhave upāsakena saṃghaṃ uddissa vihāro kārāpito hoti*). If he should send a messenger to monks, saying: “Let the revered sirs come, I want to give a gift and to hear *dhamma* and to see the monks” (*āgacchantu bhaddantā, icchāmi dānañ ca dātuṃ dhammañ ca*

¹ F. Edgerton, “The Hour of Death. Its Importance for Man’s Future Fate in Hindu and Western Religions”, *Annals of the Bhandarkar Institute* 8.3, (1926–27), p. 234; for the participation of monks in monastic funerals in both the Pāli and, especially, the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayas* see G. Schopen, “On Avoiding Ghosts and Social Censure: Monastic Funerals in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*”, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 20, (1992), pp. 1–39.

² All the Pāli citations below come from H. Oldenberg, *The Vinaya Piṭakam*, Vol. I, (London: 1879), pp. 139–42; the translations are from I.B. Horner, *The Book of The Discipline*, Vol. IV, (London: 1951), pp. 185–89.

sotum bhikkhū ca passitun ti), you should go, monks, if you are sent for (*pahita*) and if the business (*karaṇīya*) can be done in seven days, but not if you are not sent for (I 139,27; IV 186,16).

This is followed by a long list of other kinds of buildings — including “bathrooms” — and other kinds of constructions (“a lotus pond”) which a lay-brother has built for “an order,” or “for several monks” or “for one monk,” etc., in regard to which the same instructions are given. Since in these cases the order or the monks are the recipients of that which had been constructed it is perhaps not remarkable that their presence on these occasions was considered important enough to justify breaking the rain-retreat. The same, however, will not account for their presence on other occasions.

The passage continues:

This is a case, monks, where a dwelling comes to have been built by a lay follower for himself (*idha pana bhikkhave upāsakena attano atthāya nivesanam kārāpitaṃ hoti*) ... a sleeping room (*sayanighara*) ... a stable (*uddosita*) ... a hall in the bathroom ... a lotus pond ... a shed ... a park ... (I 140,27; IV 187,22).

This list — an abbreviation of an already abbreviated text — is much longer and contains almost every conceivable kind of construction of a domestic sort. Here there is no question of these things being presented to the monks. They are explicitly said to have been made for the lay-brother himself. The monks in these cases cannot be there as recipients, and their presence must have been sought, and allowed, for other purposes. Since the text expresses the lay-brothers request using the formula “I want to give a gift and to hear *dhamma* and to see the

monks”, it would seem reasonable to assume that not just here — but even in the prior cases where the monks were the intended recipients — the reason for the monks presence was essentially ritualistic. It would appear that the text is allowing as legitimate and requiring the presence of the monks at a ceremony of some sort that marked the completion — the verbal form is *kārāpita* — of the construction of all sorts of domestic structures owned by laymen at which they would receive gifts and recite religious texts. It is, in fact, hard to interpret the text otherwise. But two further points should be noted: it appears to have been assumed by the redactors of the text that monks would regularly receive such requests, and that their compliance with such requests was important enough to justify their temporary absence from the rain retreat.

If what we see here looks very much like sanctioned and assumed monastic participation in domestic “house-dedication” rituals of the kind frequently found in traditional cultures, then what follows in the passage can only further the impression. To the list of “house-dedications” the text then adds at least three other occasions of traditional domestic ritual:

This is the case, monks, where a dwelling comes to have been built by a layfollower for himself ... a sleeping room ... a park ... , or there comes to be his son’s marriage (*puttassa vā vāreyyaṃ hoti*), or there comes to be his daughter’s marriage (*dhītuyā vā vāreyyaṃ hoti*), or he becomes ill (*gilāno vā hoti*) ... (I 140,35; IV 188,3).

In each of these cases — as in those that precede — monks, if requested through the formulaic request, are to go. Since the reason or occasion that immediately follows concerns the preservation of “recognized *sūtras*” which are in danger of being lost, and since no distinction is made between it and the marriages of sons or daughters, for example, it

would seem that the redactors of the *Theravāda-vinaya* considered the latter to have the same importance as the former, or that the presence of monks at weddings was as important as the preservation of *sūtras*. It is, moreover, difficult to avoid the impression that this passage presupposes something like a “client” relationship between monks and lay-brothers. That there was some sense of obligation in this relationship seems virtually certain: the text does not say the monk *may* go, but that — if sent for and if it can be accomplished in seven days — he *must* go (*gantabba*).

The clarity of the text here renders elaborate discussion, I think, unnecessary. That the redactors of this *Vinaya* assumed and insisted on monastic presence at, and participation in, a whole series of purely domestic or life-cycle rituals seems all but self-evident. Our passage is not simply of interest for its clear articulation of a set of ritual obligations bearing on Buddhist monks, however, because it also assumes that requests for the ritual presence of monks will not be made only by laymen. It goes on to enumerate in very nearly the same language another series of individuals who have dwelling places and monasteries built for the order and themselves, and who also request the ritual presence of the monks on such occasions:

This is a case, monks, where a dwelling place ... a site for a monastery for an order ... for several monks ... for him- (her-) self is built by a monk ... a nun ... a probationer ... a novice ... (*idha pana bhikkhave bhikkhunā saṃghaṃ uddissa, bhikkhuniyā saṃghaṃ uddissa ... attano atthāya vihāro kārāpito hoti*). If he (she) should send a messenger to monks, saying: “Let the revered sirs (masters) come. I want to give a gift and to hear *dhamma* and to see the monks,” you should go, monks, if you are sent for and if the business can be done in seven days ... (I 141,31; IV 189,11).

Here, too, I think, the text has an elegant clarity. The redactors of our passage could only have assumed and taken very much for granted that — exactly as laymen — monks, nuns, “probationers” (*sikkhamāna*), and novices (*sāmaṇera*), all had monasteries and monastic buildings regularly constructed both for the order and for themselves, and — again like laymen — had on such occasions need for the ritual presence of fellow monks. The text does not rule on, but assumes, that monks and nuns can and do act as major donors. We need not again belabour the fact that this kind of assumption on the part of the redactors of the *Theravāda-vinaya* fits awkwardly, if at all, in the picture of monastic Buddhism found in our handbooks, but very nicely with the actions of monks and nuns recorded in Indian inscriptions.¹ The role of monks in domestic rituals also is not a common-place in modern presentations of monastic Buddhism. The apparent discordancy — since we prefer so often the pictures in our *own* books — might suggest some suspicion in regard to the present passage, or that it is just another aberration peculiar to the Pāli *Vinaya*.² That such suspicions are unfounded seems to follow from two further quite different texts.

The *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* found at Gilgit has a section — the *Varṣāvastu* — that corresponds in the main to the Pāli

¹ See G. Schopen, “Filial Piety and the Monk in the Practice of Indian Buddhism”, *T’oung Pao* 70, (1984), pp. 110–26; Schopen, “Two Problems in the History of Indian Buddhism: The Layman/Monk Distinction and Doctrines of the Transference of Merit”, *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 10, (1985), pp. 9–47; Schopen, “On Monks, Nuns and ‘Vulgar’ Practices: The Introduction of the Image Cult into Indian Buddhism”, *Artibus Asiae* 49, 1–2, (1988–89), pp. 153–68; etc.

² The presence in the Pāli canonical *Vinaya* of rules governing the obligatory presence of monks at weddings, for example, is particularly intriguing in light of what has recently been said about the modern “change” and “transformation” of Buddhism in Sri Lanka; see R. Gombrich & G. Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed. Religious Change in Sri Lanka*, (Princeton: 1988), pp. 265–73; H.L. Seneviratne, *Rituals of the Kandyan State*, (Cambridge: 1978), p. 129; etc.

Vassupanāyika-khandhaka. There is as well in the Gilgit *Varṣāvastu* a long passage which corresponds to the Pāli passage cited above which enumerates the occasions on which the monks may legitimately be away during the rain-retreat. Both the enumeration and language here are similar to what occurs in the Pāli *Vinaya*, but by no means the same. The *Varṣāvastu* passage starts with a list of obligations (*karaṇīya*) owed to *upāsakas* or lay-brothers. Unfortunately the description of the very first of the occasions on which a monk must go when sent for by a layman involves a textual — and perhaps lexical — problem which I cannot solve. It is, however, virtually certain that it had something to do with the marriage of the lay-brother.¹ I therefore cite what is in fact the last occasion enumerated to give an example of the formulaic character of the language used in this text:

There is moreover a further obligation to a lay-brother (*upāsakasya karaṇīyam*). It may occur that a lay-brother has a sickness, suffering, a serious illness. He will send a messenger

¹ N. Dutt, *Gilgit Manuscripts*, Vol. III, pt. IV, (Calcutta: 1950), 138.9 prints the text as follows: *kim upāsakasya karaṇīyena / yathāpi tad upāsakasya grha-kalatram pratyupasthitam bhavati ātmano veṣṭanam ... sa bhikṣūnām dūtam anupreṣayati ...*. On at least two occasions immediately prior to this passage a householder is described in similar terms: *tatra ... grhapatiḥ prativasati / tasya grha-kalatram pratyupasthitam / ātmano veṣṭanam ...* (136.15; 137.13; see also 140.22). Unfortunately in all these cases the manuscript seems to read not *grha-kalatram*, but *grha-kanutram* (R. Vira & L. Chandra, *Gilgit Buddhist Manuscripts*, Part 6, (New Delhi: 1974), 733.8; 734.3; 734.7; 736.1), and I do not know what *-kanutram* means. I suspect that Dutt also did not and — as he so often did — silently “corrected” the text on the basis of the Tibetan: *dge bsnyen gyi bya ba gang zhe na / 'di ltar yang dge bsnyen gyis khyim du rang gi 'ching ba bag ma blangs te /* (*The Tog Palace Manuscript of the Tibetan Kanjur*, Vol. I, (Leh: 1979), 692.2; cf. 689.2; 690.6; 696.1). Although, again, I do not fully understand the phrase *khyim du rang gi 'ching ba*, the Tibetan text has certainly understood its text to be referring to the lay-brothers’ marriage.

to the monks (saying) “Will the Venerable Ones give a recitation” (*āryā vācam dāsyanti*). A monk should go, having been authorized for seven days, through this obligation to a lay-brother (*gantavyaṃ bhikṣuṇā saptāhaṃ adhiṣṭhāya upāsakasya karaṇīyena*).¹

The *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*, like the *Vinaya* of the Theravāda, assumes, then, and requires the presence of monks at certain lay, domestic “life-cycle” ceremonies. It does not list all the same occasions, however, referring explicitly only to marriage and serious, if not terminal, illness. The *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* does not seem to refer to “house dedication” rituals; it certainly does not contain the long list of different kinds of structures found in the Pāli. But it does contain some of the same occasions found in the Pāli that are more specifically “Buddhist.” It refers, for example, to a lay-brother having a *vihāra* constructed, although here too it uses a different language: “It may occur that a lay-brother wishes to have erected a monastery for the community of monks from the four directions” (*yathāpi tad upāsakaś cāturdiśe bhikṣu-saṃghe vihāraṃ pratiṣṭhāpayitu-kāmo bhavati*). It also lists a number of more specifically “Buddhist” occasions not found in the Pāli *Vinaya*: a lay-brother “desiring to donate bedding and seats to that monastery” (... *asminn eva vihāre śayanāsanam anupradātukāmo bhavati*), “wanting to designate a permanent alms giving” in it (... *asminn eva vihāre dhruva-bhikṣāṃ prajñāpayitukāmo bhavati*), and, interestingly, “wanting to have erected a *stūpa* for the body of the Tathāgata in that monastery” (... *tasminn eva vihāre tathāgatasya śarīra-stūpaṃ pratiṣṭhāpayitu-kāmo bhavati*).² In all of these cases — as in the case of marriage and illness — if the monks are sent for, and if they can

¹ Dutt, *Gilgit Manuscripts*, III, 4, 140.17.

² Dutt, *Gilgit Manuscripts*, III, 4, 138.14–139.11.

return within seven days, they are of course required to go. One of such occasions, however, may be particularly important because we may be able to connect it with a record that can be much more securely placed in time and place.

The Gilgit text gives one of the more specifically Buddhist occasions in the following form:

There is moreover a further obligation to a lay-brother. It may occur that a lay-brother wants to donate the raising of a staff on that *stūpa*, the raising of an umbrella, the raising of a flag, the raising of a banner ... he sends a messenger to the monks ... a monk should go ... (*aparam apy upāsakasya karaṇīyam. yathāpi tad upāsakas tasminn eva stūpe yaṣṭy-āropanaṃ chatrāropanaṃ dhvajāropanaṃ patākāropanaṃ ... anupradātukāmo bhavati ... sa bhikṣuṇāṃ dūtam anupreṣayati ... gantavyaṃ bhikṣuṇā ...*).¹

Admitting that the exact sense of *yaṣṭi* — though much discussed² — is uncertain, still it is difficult not to see in this passage a regulation which corresponds almost exactly to the record of an actual event which appears to have occurred at a *stūpa* near Bahāwalpur in the first century of the Common Era. This event was recorded in a *Kharoṣṭhī* inscription, the language of which is “a Sanskritized Prākṛit.”

¹ Dutt, *Gilgit Manuscripts*, III, 4, 139.11–17.

² F. Weller, “Divyāvadāna 244.7 ff.”, *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 1, (1953), pp. 268–76; L. Alsdorf, “Der Stūpa des Kṣemaṃkara”, *Studia Indologica (Festschrift für Willibald Kirfel)*, (Bonn: 1955), pp. 9–16; M. Bénisti, “Étude sur le stūpa dans l’Inde ancienne”, *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* 50, (1960), pp. 37–116, esp. pp. 76 foll.; F.B.J. Kuiper, “Yūpayasṭi- (Divy. 244,11)”, *Indo-Iranian Journal* 3, (1959), pp. 204–05; G. Roth, “Bemerkungen zum Stūpa des Kṣemaṃkara”, *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 5/6, (1980), pp. 181–92; etc.

Although there have been some differences of opinion in regard to its interpretation, Konow's — as usual — appears to be basically correct:

The eleventh year — year 11 — of the Great King, the King Surpassing Kings, the Son of Devas, Kaniṣka, in the month of Daisios, on the eighteenth day — day 18 — when the monk (*bhikṣu*) Nāgadatta, a narrator of *dharma* (*dha[rma]kathi*), the student (*śiṣya*) of the teacher (*acarya*) Damatrāta, the student's student of the teacher Bhava, raised the staff (*yaṭhiṃ aropayata*) here in Damana, the mistress of the monastery (*viharasvamiṇi*), the lay-sister (*upasika*) Balānandī and the matron, her mother Balajayā, also gave, in addition to the setting up of the *yaṣṭi* (*imaṃ yaṭhipratīṭhanam*), the enclosure (*parivara*). May this be for the benefit and ease of all living beings.¹

Here we seem to have the record of almost precisely the kind of occasion envisioned in the text. A lay-sister donates “the setting up of a *yaṣṭi*” at a *stūpa*, but the presence of a monk — if not his actual direction of the event — is carefully recorded, using in at least one case exactly the same wording as the *Vinaya* passage. The importance of the epigraphical record lies, of course, in the fact that it allows us to say

¹ For Konow's edition and translation see S. Konow, *Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions with the exception of those of Aśoka* (Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. II, Part I), (Calcutta: 1929), pp. 139–41 (no. LXXIV), pl. XXVI — my translation is heavily indebted to his. For some earlier interpretations of the record see A.F.R. Hoernle, “Readings from the Arian Pāli”, *The Indian Antiquary* 10, (1881), pp. 324–31; B. Indrajī, “A Baktrō-Pāli Inscription of Sui Bāhāra”, *The Indian Antiquary* 11, (1882), pp. 128–29; N.G. Majumdar, “The Suē Vihar Copper-plate of the Reign of Kaniṣka”, *Sir Asutosh Mookerji Silver Jubilee Volumes*, III, 1, (Calcutta: 1922), pp. 459–74.

that what was promulgated in at least this *Vinaya* appears to actually have been occurring by the first century.¹

Apart from these points, and apart from noting too that the *Mūlasarvāstivāda* passage also lists as one occasion the recitation of texts by a lay-brother, we need only note that this *Vinaya* not only confirms the kind of participation of monks in domestic rituals that was taken for granted in the Pāli *Vinaya*, it also assumes — again as in the Pāli — that monks will regularly act as donors. The first of a monk's “obligations” to fellow monks occurs in the following form:

What is the obligation to a monk (*bhikṣoḥ karaṇīyam*). It may occur that a monk wants to present a park to the community of monks from the four directions (*yathāpi tad bhikṣuṣ cāturdīśe bhikṣusamghe ārāmaṃ niryātayitukāmo bhavati*). By him there an abundance of material things and worldly things are brought together (*tena tatra prabhūto vastulābha āmiṣalābhaś ca*

¹ If our *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* passage strongly argues for Konow's interpretation of the *Kharoṣṭhī* inscription, it is less helpful for understanding the references to *yaṣṭis* or *laṣṭis* in a series of records from Western India — see B. Indrajī, “The Western Kshatrapas”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, (1890), p. 652; R.D. Banerji, “The Andhau Inscriptions of the Time of Rudradaman”, *Epigraphia Indica* 16, (1921–22), pp. 19–25 (two of these might be Buddhist); S. Gokhale, “Andhau Inscription of Caṣṭana, Śaka 11”, *Journal of Ancient Indian History* 2, (1969), pp. 104–11; D.C. Sircar, “Andhau Fragmentary Inscription of Caṣṭana, Year 11”, *Journal of Indian History* 48, (1970), pp. 253–57; S. Sankaranarayanan, “A New Early Kushana Brahmi Inscription”, *Śrinidhih. Perspectives in Indian Archaeology, Art and Culture. Shri K.R. Srinivasan Festschrift*, ed. K.V. Raman et al., (Madras: 1983), pp. 277–84; etc. — Although the references that I know are late, it is worth noting that — like our *Mūlasarvāstivāda* passage — Hindu inscriptions also refer to a ritual *dhvajāroha* or *dhvajārohaṇa*, see R. Sharma, “Udayapur Inscription of Paramara Udayaditya, Vikrama 1137”, *Epigraphia Indica* 38, (1970), pp. 281 foll.; S.L. Katare, “Kalanjara Inscription of V.S. 1147”, *Epigraphia Indica* 31, (1955–56), pp. 163 foll.; etc.

samupānīto bhavati). He sends a messenger to the monks (saying) “Come! The Reverends will enjoy”. A monk should go, having been authorized for seven days, through this obligation to a monk.¹

In referring to “bringing together material and worldly things” the text uses exactly the same formulaic wording it had used several times previously in regard to lay-brothers. Moreover, immediately after this passage the text also lists in abbreviated form virtually all the occasions it had enumerated in detail in regard to obligations to lay-brothers (*yathāpi tad bhikṣur asminn evārāme vihāraṃ śayanāsanam dhruvabhikṣaṃ tathāgatasya śārīrastūpaṃ*, etc.).² As in the section

¹ Dutt, *Gilgit Manuscripts*, III, 4, 141.1 foll.

² Dutt, *Gilgit Manuscripts*, III, 4, 141.6 foll. It will have been noticed that where the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* makes full reference to *stūpas* the *Theravāda-vinaya* has none. On this pattern see G. Schopen, “The *Stūpa* Cult and the Extant Pāli Vinaya”, *JPTS* XIII, (1989), pp. 83–100 and the responses to it in O. von Hinüber, “*Khandhakavatta*. Loss of Text in the Pāli Vinaya”, *JPTS* XV, (1990), pp. 127–38; C. Hallisey, “Apropos the Pāli Vinaya as a Historical Document. A Reply to Gregory Schopen”, *ibid.*, pp. 197–208; R. Gombrich, “Making Mountains Without Molehills: The Case of the Missing *Stūpa*”, *ibid.*, pp. 141–43. What has come out of this discussion — apart from some light entertainment provided by Professor Gombrich — seems to be: an increased awareness of the complexity and extent of Pāli *Vinaya* literature, and a promising suggestion that there is something like an “ideal” *Vinaya* (the canonical *Vinaya*) and an “actually used” *Vinaya* (the various summaries and “different monastic handbooks”), with the consequent confirmation of the suggestion “that the canonical *Vinaya* text is not as useful as once thought as a ready source for extracting usable historical data” (Hallisey, p. 207). It seems too that the suggestion of “the loss of text” is weaker even than I thought, but some problems remain. Though the *Katikāvata* passage might be neutralized by invoking the *du* or *ca*, this will not affect the *Visuddhimagga* passages. They, as Hallisey says, “are more difficult to explain.” There is, moreover, what appears to be a much more likely case of “loss of text” — here again concerning “relics” — in the Sri Lankan mss. of the *Samyutta* (see G. Schopen, “An Old

dealing with lay-brothers, so here the section ends with reference to a monk’s obligation to attend to a sick or dying fellow monk by giving a recitation (*yathāpi tad bhikṣur ābādhiko duḥkhito vādhaglāno bhavati. sa bhikṣūṇaṃ dūtaṃ anupreṣayati. āgacchantv āyusmanto vācāṃ bhā[ṣi]syanti*, etc.).¹

We have, then, two apparently distinct *Vinaya* traditions — the *Theravāda* and *Mūlasarvāstivāda* — which both assume and enjoin monastic participation in at least some domestic, lay, life-cycle rituals and take as a given the fact that monks — exactly like laymen — make both major and minor religious donations, and that when they do, other monks are obliged to be present. There is, moreover, at least a third *Vinaya* tradition in which we find something very similar.

The *Abhisamācārikā*, the “Prākṛit-cum-Sanskrit” text of which was discovered in Tibet by R. Sankṛityayana, belongs to the *Mahāsāṅghika-Lokottaravāda* monastic tradition. In its formal structure it does not contain divisions corresponding to the Pāli *Vassupanāyika-khandhaka* nor to the Gilgit *Varṣāvastu* and, as a consequence, we do not find in it a passage that formally corresponds to those we have discussed. We do find, however, the expression of the same sorts of

Inscription from Amarāvati and the Cult of the Local Monastic Dead in Indian Buddhist Monasteries”, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14.2, (1991), pp. 281–329 [p. 328 note 111]. Finally, it seems absolutely certain — given Professor Gombrich’s agreement — that it can no longer be said that the Pāli *Vinaya* does not contain any references to *stūpas*. He seems to have been so convinced by my suggestion that the references to *cetiya*s in the *Sutta-Vibhaṅga* are to be understood as referring to *stūpas* that he wants to use them against me (p. 140). But the presence of such rules in one part of the Pāli *Vinaya*, but not in another, does not seem to puzzle.

¹ Dutt, *Gilgit Manuscripts*, III, 4, 142.5. Elsewhere in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* — in its *Cīvara-vastu* — there are even more specific rules governing the performance of a “worship of the Teacher (= Buddha)” (*śāstus ca pūjā*) for a sick and dying monk and how that *pūjā* should be financed (N. Dutt, *Gilgit Manuscripts*, Vol. III, Part 2, (Srinagar: 1942), 124.11–125.9).

assumptions and ideas. In its first chapter,¹ for example, which deals in large part with the duties of a senior monk (*saṃgha-sthavira*), it says that one of the duties of such a monk is to determine, when an invitation to a meal has been received by the monks, what the occasion for the meal is (*jānitavyaṃ. kim ālambanaṃ bhaktaṃ*). He is to determine whether, significantly, the invitation is “connected with a birth, connected with a death, connected with a marriage, connected with a house warming” (*jātakam mṛtakam vā vevāhikam vā grha-praveśakam vā*).² These are the occasions, apparently, on which it was assumed monks would receive and accept invitations from the laity, and they — as in the Pāli and Gilgit *Vinayas* — are all connected with domestic life-cycle rituals. The text goes on to say that in addition to the occasion, the senior monk must also determine the source of the invitation, he must determine whether it comes from “a visitor, a villager, a householder, or a renunciant” (*āgantukasya gamikasya grhasthasya pravrajitasya*). It is clear from the instructions given by the senior monk to the person sent to determine these things that when the inviter is a householder he is generally assumed to be a lay-brother or *upāsaka* (*tena gacchiya prcchitavyam, koci imaṃ hi itthannāmo nāma upāsako*). It is equally clear from similar instructions that the inviter could be a monk or nun (*ko nimantreti, bhikṣu bhikṣuṇī upāsakopāsikā āgantuko gamiko vāñijako sārthavāho*).³

¹ The whole text was first edited in B. Jinananda, *Abhisamācārikā [Bhikṣuprakīrṇaka]* (Patna: 1969). The first chapter has been again edited and translated — though the latter at least is far from satisfactory — in S. Singh & K. Minowa, “A Critical Edition and Translation of Abhisamācārikā Nāma Bhikṣu-Prakīrṇakaḥ”, *Buddhist Studies. The Journal of the Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi* 12 (1988) pp. 81–146; see also M. Prasad, *A Comparative Study of Abhisamācārikā* (Patna: 1984).

² Singh & Minowa, 91.26; Jinananda, 17.8.

³ Singh & Minowa, 91.27; 89.32; 95.27; Jinananda, 17.9; 14.9; 25.1.

After indicating how all of this should be determined the text goes on to specify how on each occasion the “transfer of merit” apparently expected from the monks should be performed, citing — curiously — both an inappropriate and an appropriate verse to be recited that in every case is tailored to the specific occasion. Typical are the instructions concerning an invitation “connected with a death”:

Now, then, when it is an occasion connected with a death, it is not permissible to direct the reward thus (*nāyaṃ kṣamati evaṃ dakṣiṇā ādiśitum*):

“Today for you is a very good day, very efficacious. At present has arrived an auspicious moment.

Today for you in the well-ordained, through the well-ordained, the reward in the most excellent vessel shines.”

Not in this way is the reward to be directed, but rather the reward should be directed (*atha khalu dakṣiṇā ādiśitavyā*):

“All living beings will die. Indeed life ends in death. As was their action so they will go, going towards the result of good or bad.

There is hell for those of bad action; good being done, they go to heaven. Having developed the noble path they without further consequences enter *nirvāṇa*.”

In this way the reward is to be directed.¹

The monks on each occasion are required to recite an appropriate verse and “to direct the reward” that results from this. Though not frequent the expression used here to refer to the “transfer of

¹ Singh & Minowa, 92.15 foll.; Jinananda, 18.13 foll.

merit” — *dakṣiṇā ādiś-* — does occur in the Pāli canon, and there, as here, is also associated with the recitation of verses. It is far more frequent and firmly anchored in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* and related sources, where again it is frequently connected with the recitation of verses or *Dharma*. And it is referred to as well in other Mahāsāṅghika sources.¹ The appropriate verse here — as in most other cases — occurs elsewhere in canonical literature.² But for our present purposes the most important point to be noted is, of course, that the *Abhisamācārikā*, though representing yet another distinct *Vinaya* tradition, assumes, and makes rules to govern, the participation of monks in domestic life-cycle rituals, and assumes as well that monks and nuns act as donors. Though minor details may vary, it has in common a set of basic assumptions and ideas with both the Theravāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda monastic traditions and codes. All share the assumption and acceptance of a monk’s obligation to be present at, and to have an active role in, a variety of domestic, life-cycle rituals connected with birth, marriage, house construction, sickness, and death. All promulgate rules governing such obligations.³ All recognize as perfectly regular that monks and nuns will

¹ For references in both primary and secondary sources, and some discussion, concerning the expression *dakṣiṇā ādiś-* see Schopen, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 20, (1992), pp. 1–39 (p. 30 note 43). It has yet, however, to be fully studied.

² This verse or variants of it occur at *Mahāvastu* II 66; *Saṃyutta* I 97; etc.

³ The various *Vinayas* obviously do not list all the same ritual occasions. The *Abhisamācārikā* list is the most inclusive and the Pāli *Vinaya* puts considerable emphasis on “house dedication” rituals. The *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* is noticeably the most restrictive in terms of the kind of domestic rituals at which monks are obliged to be present. The explanation for these differences is, of course, not yet determined, but it may well be related not to chronology, but to the cultural and geographical milieu in which the various codes were redacted. We may see in the restrictive character of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*, for example, another indication that it was redacted by, and for, a Buddhist monastic community in close contact with brahmanical or significantly brahmanized

act as donors. The texts, I think, are unambiguous on these points, although there is as well an important qualification in all of them.

The qualification or restriction which appears to apply to the obligations monks owe to others is highlighted in, for example, another discussion in the Pāli *Vinaya*. The case involves a monk whose mother falls ill and sends for him during the rain retreat. The monk is made to recall the Buddha’s ruling on the matter, but it apparently does not cover this particular case because the monk says: *ayaṃ ca me mātā gilānā sā ca anupāsikā. kathaṃ nu kho mayā paṭipajjitabban ti*, (“This is my mother who is fallen ill, but she is not a lay-sister. How now should I proceed?”). The Buddha responds by adding one’s mother and father to the previously established list of individuals — all otherwise formally connected with the Buddhist community — to whom a monk had a clear obligation in such circumstances: A monk, a nun, a probationer, a novice, a woman novice, and lay-brothers and sisters¹

This case confirms and makes explicit what all our texts, whether Theravāda, Mūlasarvāstivāda, or Mahāsāṅghika, seem to imply: the obligation of monks to attend and participate in lay life-cycle ceremonies is not owed to the total lay population, but only to individuals who are formally designated as lay-brothers (*upāsakas*) or lay-sisters (*upāsikās*). To which the Pāli tradition at least adds one’s mother and father, even if the latter are not formerly connected with the Buddhist community. This restriction is significant for understanding the social dynamics of the Buddhist community as it was understood by *vinaya* masters. It is also significant because epigraphical material seems strongly to suggest that only a small part of those people who made

groups in which domestic ritual was already in the hands of other religious specialists. The needs or requirements of a monastic group in “tribal” or partially brahmanized areas could differ markedly. Cf. Schopen, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 20, (1992), pp. 1–39 (esp. pp. 18–20).

¹ Pāli *Vinaya* I 147,20 foll.

strongly to suggest that only a small part of those people who made gifts at Buddhist sites identified themselves as *upāsakas* or *upāsikās*.¹ The ritual clientele of Buddhist monks may necessarily have been limited in early India. The problem that remains, however, is determining what “early” can mean here.

The situation encountered here is nothing new. It recurs repeatedly in the study of “early” Buddhist canonical sources, especially when textual sources transmitted by more than one Buddhist monastic order are consulted. We have in our case texts redacted and transmitted by the Theravāda, Mūlasarvāstivāda, and Mahāsāṅghika which — although they differ in regard to detail — share or have in common a set of rules and a common assumption in regard to monastic participation in domestic ritual. To account for such shared or common elements two basic theories have been used. One says that common elements in discrete textual and monastic sources must go back to a period which predates the development of “schisms.” The other says that such common elements are the result of “contamination,” mutual borrowing and a process of levelling, and therefore are late.² The first theory depends on the assumption that Buddhist monastic groups can be meaningfully treated as “sects” — this has been repeatedly questioned.³

¹ A thorough study of *upāsakas* and *upāsikās* in Indian Buddhist inscriptions has yet to be done. But at Sañci *stūpa* no. 1, for example, only 18 of the more than 325 lay donors call themselves *upāsakas* or *upāsikās*; at Bharhut none do; at Nasik only 4 of 23; at Karle only 2 of 22; and I very much suspect a similar pattern will hold through out until at least the fifth/sixth century.

² Cf. L.O. Gómez, “Buddhism in India”, in *Buddhism and Asian History*, ed. J.M. Kitagawa & M.D. Cummings, (New York: 1989), p. 64; L. Schmithausen, “Preface”, *Earliest Buddhism and Madhyamaka* (Panels of the VIIth World Sanskrit Conference, Vol. II), (Leiden: 1990), pp. 1–2.

³ See H. Bechert, “Zur Geschichte der buddhistischen Sekten in Indien und Ceylon”, *La nouvelle clío* 7–9, (1955–57), pp. 311–60; Bechert, “On the Identification of Buddhist Schools in Early Sri Lanka”, *Indology and Law*.

It depends on the assumption that once developed these “sects” existed in isolation, hermetically sealed, with no significant contact or interchange — this is contrary to all our evidence.¹ It depends on the assumption that we actually know when the splits or “schisms” occurred — but we do not. The textual sources — all very late — give a variety of discordant dates and epigraphical sources suggest that discrete monastic orders appeared centuries later than our textual sources say.² Finally, this theory assumes that “orthodoxy” or uniformity among related religious groups is established first and then only over time do significant differences develop — this is contrary to almost everything “church historians” and sociologists have discovered: if uniformity is ever achieved it is achieved over more or less long periods of time through a complex process of mutual influence, borrowing, and sometimes violent levelling that works on originally discrete and competing groups and voices.³ The second theory seems to avoid these problems.

A similar — in fact related — set of questions concerns the date of the various *Vinayas*. But it too seems that the old observations and arguments of Wassilieff and Lévi remain unrefuted and best account for

¹ Ét. Lamotte, *Histoire du bouddhisme indien des origines à l'ère śaka*, (Louvain: 1958), p. 197.

² See Schopen, *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 10, (1985), pp. 15–16.

³ See, for example, the now “classic” W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, (Philadelphia: 1971). Something similar has occasionally been argued in the development of Indian Buddhism — but only occasionally. J. Przyluski, for example, in discussing the *pratītyasamutpāda* formula said many years ago: “En somme, nous ne pouvons admettre qu'il y eût à l'origine du Bouddhisme une série de douze ‘conditions’ dont les autres listes ne seraient que des déformations récentes. Plus haut nous remontons dans le passé, plus grande est la diversité que nous constatons. C'est probablement à une époque assez tardive qu'on s'efforça de concilier les thèses divergentes et que finit par prévaloir la série: *avidyā ... jarāmarāṇa*” (J. Przyluski, “La roue de la vie à Ajañṭā”, *Journal Asiatique*, (1920), pp. 327–28).

what seem to be the facts. The former said some years ago that it appears that "les Vinayas parvenus à nous ont été rédigés à une époque tardive," and the evidence seems to be mounting in his favour.¹

Fortunately, however, the dates of the *Vinayas* need not here be decided. It is probably true that in terms of absolute chronology *all* the *Vinayas* are late. But from the point-of-view of relative chronology they also represent the earliest codification of monastic rules that we have. For our specific purposes this means that monastic presence and participation in a range of domestic life-cycle rituals is assumed, judged important, and prescribed in the earliest *Vinaya* literature that we have, and that our earliest *Vinaya* sources assume that monks and nuns will regularly act as donors and rule on the obligations of fellow monks when they do.

We still, of course, do not know if monks actually participated in domestic rituals. We only know that the monk redactors of several *Vinayas* assumed they did and said they should. That monks and nuns acted as donors, however, is certain. Not only do those same monk redactors assume they did, and formulate rules for governing the behaviour of other monks when they would, but Indian inscriptions put

¹ W. Wassilieff [V. Vasilyev], "Le bouddhisme dans son plein développement d'après les vinayas", *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 34, (1896), pp. 318–25, esp. pp. 321 foll.; S. Lévi, "Les éléments de formation du Divyāvadāna", *T'oung Pao* 8, (1907), pp. 116–17 and note 1; Lévi, "Les saintes écritures du bouddhisme", in *Mémorial Sylvain Lévi*, (Paris: 1937), pp. 82–84: "De plus, la vie du couvent, qui allait en se développant sans cesse, proposait ainsi sans cesse des problèmes pratiques qu'il fallait résoudre au nom du fondateur de l'ordre. Les couvents les plus riches, les mieux fréquentés, se créaient ainsi des collections qui se perpétuaient en s'accroissant. Les religieux errants, qui circulaient toujours nombreux de couvent en couvent, maintenaient dans ce vaste ensemble une communication constante qui tendait à niveler les divergences trop accusées. Réduits par élagage à leurs éléments communs, les Vinaya de toutes les écoles se ramènent sans effort à une sorte d'archétype unique, qui n'est pas le Vinaya primitif, mais la moyenne des Vinaya."

acted as donors, however, is certain. Not only do those same monk redactors assume they did, and formulate rules for governing the behaviour of other monks when they would, but Indian inscriptions put this beyond any doubt. Once again the isolated, socially disengaged "early" Buddhist monk of modern scholars and Mahāyāna polemics is difficult to find.¹

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¹ The influence of the characterizations of "early" monks found in Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature on modern scholarly characterizations is a subject not yet studied, but one which may well be of particular significance. There are cases, for example, where what appears to be Mahāyāna polemical caricature has been used to account for historical development. Dayal has said that " ... it seems that the Buddhist monks ... in the second century B.C. ... emphasised a few duties to the exclusion of others. They became too self-centered and contemplative, and did not evince the old zeal for missionary activity among the people. They seem to have cared only for their own liberation from sin and sorrow. They were indifferent to the duty of teaching and helping all human beings The *bodhisattva* ideal can be understood only against this background of a saintly and serene, but inactive and indolent monastic order" (H. Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*, (London: 1932), pp. 2–3). This explanation of an historical occurrence has, in a variety of forms, often been repeated (see Lamotte, *Histoire du bouddhisme indien*, 73, 78, 699), but no evidence for it is ever cited, and it appears to be little more than a paraphrase of the polemical position taken in Mahāyāna *sūtras*. There is, moreover, little, if any, indication in Indian inscriptions that monks — either before or after the beginning of the Common Era — were "self-centered", "cared only for their own liberation" and were "indifferent to ... helping all human beings." In fact, the indications are quite otherwise. They suggest a monk very active in giving, concerned with benefiting parents, teachers, friends, and "all beings", and very much engaged in the social world (see the references in note 1 on p. 92 above). We see this monk in Indian inscriptions which date to almost exactly the period during which we think Mahāyāna *sūtras* were first composed. Obviously, much remains to be learned here.